

Whose Lathe?

In a small town near Portland late this spring (1984), a novel, *The Lathe of Heaven*, was the subject of a hearing concerning its suitability for use in a senior high-school literature class. I took a lively interest in the outcome, because I wrote the novel.

The case against the book was presented first. The man who was asking that it be withdrawn stated his objections to the following elements in the book: fuzzy thinking and poor sentence structure; a mention of homosexuality; a character who keeps a flask of brandy in her purse, and who remarks that her mother did not love her. (It seemed curious to me that he did not mention the fact that this same character is a Black woman whose lover /husband is a White man. I had the feeling that this was really what he hated in the book, and that he was afraid to say so; but that was only my feeling.)

He also took exception to what he described as the author's advocacy of non-Christian religions and/or of non-separation of Church and State (his arguments on this point, or these points, were not clear to me).

Finally, during discussion, he compared the book to junk food, apparently because it was science fiction.

The English Department of the school then presented a carefully prepared, spirited defense of the book, including statements by students who had read it. Some liked it, some didn't like it, most objected to having it, or any other book, banned.

In discussion, teachers pointed out that since it is the policy of the Washougal School District to assign an alternative book to any student who objects on any grounds to reading an assigned one, the attempt to prevent a whole class from reading a book was an attempt to change policy, replacing free choice by censorship.

When the Instructional Materials Committee of the district voted on the motion to ban the book, the motion was defeated twenty votes to five. The hearing was public and was conducted in the most open and democratic fashion. I did not speak, as I felt the teachers and students had spoken eloquently for me.

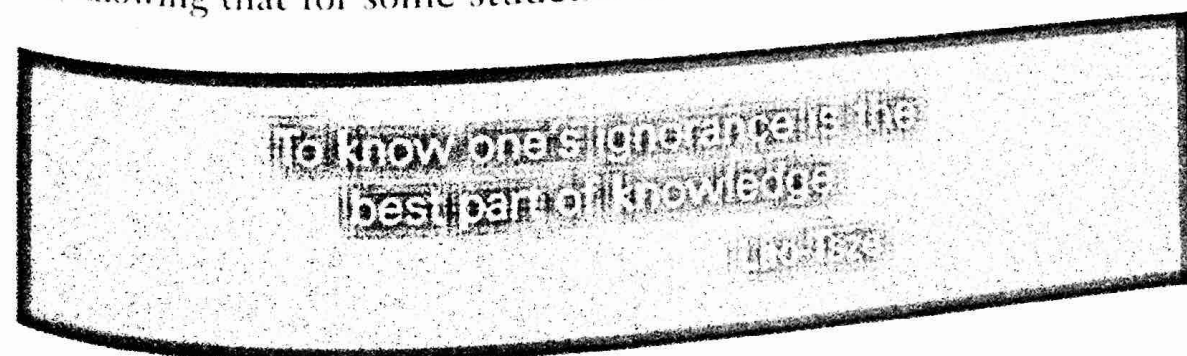
Crankish attacks on the freedom to read are common at present. When backed and coordinated by organized groups, they become sinister. In this case, I saw something going on that worried me a good deal because it did not seem to be coming from an outside pressure group, but from elements of the educational establishment itself: this was the movement to change policy radically by instituting, or "clarifying," guidelines or criteria for the selection/elimination of books used in the schools. The motion on which this committee of the school district voted was actually that the book be withdrawn *"while guidelines and policies for the district are worked out."* Those guidelines and policies were the real goal, I think, of the motion.

Guidelines? That sounds dull. Innocent. Useful. Of course we have to be sure about the kinds of books we want our kids to read in school. Don't we?

Well, do we? The dangerous vagueness of the term "guidelines and policies for the district" slides right past such questions as: Who are "we"? Who decides what the children read? Does "we" include you? Me? Teachers? Librarians? Students? Are fifteen-to-eighteen-year-olds ever "we," or are they always "they"?

And what are the guidelines to be? On what criteria or doctrines are they to be based?

The people concerned with schools in Oregon try, with ever-decreasing budgets, to provide good, sound food in the school cafeterias, knowing that for some students that's the only real meal they get.



They try, with ever-decreasing budgets, to provide beautiful, intelligent books in classes and school libraries, knowing that for many students those are the only books they read. To provide the best: everyone agrees on that (even the people who vote against school levies). But we don't and we can't agree on what books are the best. And therefore what is vital is that we provide variety, abundance, plenty—not books that reflect one body of opinion or doctrine, not books that one group or sect thinks good, but the broadest, richest range of intellectual and artistic material possible.

Nobody is forced to read any of it. There is that very important right to refuse and choose an alternative.

When a bad apple turns up, it can be taken out of the barrel on a case-by-case, book-by-book basis—investigated, defended, prosecuted, and judged, as in the hearing on my *Lathe of Heaven*. But this can't be done wholesale by using “guidelines,” instructions for censorship. There is no such thing as a moral filter that lets good books through and keeps bad books out. Such criteria of “goodness” and “badness” are a moralist's dream but a democrat's nightmare.

Censorship, here or in Russia or wherever, is absolutely anti-democratic and elitist. The censor says: You don't know enough to choose, but we do, so you will read what we choose for you and nothing else. The democrat says: The process of learning is that of learning how to choose. Freedom isn't given, it's earned. Read, learn, and earn it.

I fear censorship in this Uriah Heepish¹ guise of “protecting our children,” “stricter criteria,” “moral guidance,” “a more definite policy,” and so on. I hope administrators, teachers, librarians, parents, and students will resist it. Its advocates are people willing to treat others not only as if they were not free but were not even worthy of freedom.

¹**Uriah Heepish:** Behaving in the manner of Uriah Heep, a servile character in *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens

Ursula K. Le Guin, born in California, is a prolific writer best known for her science fiction and fantasy titles for young adults. She also writes poetry, children's books, novels, and short stories. A few of her over 30 titles include: *Going Out With Peacocks and Other Poems*, *Catwings*, *Always Coming Home*, *Rocannon's World*, and *The Wind's Twelve Quarters*.

1. Response

- a. "Whose Lathe?" is divided into two distinct parts. What are they and how do they work together to develop the argument?
- b. What specific biases does Ursula K. Le Guin bring to her essay? How do you know? What counter-arguments might someone use in debating the issue of censorship with Le Guin?
- c. Have you seen any movies or listened to any recordings that you would not share with a nine-year-old? Validate your decision.
- d. Do you practise censorship on yourself, avoiding materials that you think are inappropriate? Explain your position, giving examples if possible.

2. Media Censorship Survey Conduct a survey on community attitudes toward censorship. You'll need to draft a questionnaire that asks specific questions about the appropriateness of censorship and the creation of guidelines. Find out which media (movies, computer games, CDs, Web sites, TV shows, and so on) people think should be subject to censorship. When your questionnaire is ready, distribute it to various grades in your school and to teachers and parents. Analyse the findings. What conclusions can you make? Report your findings to your class using PowerPoint or overheads.

3. Literature Studies Organizational Patterns There are several ways of organizing an essay. These organizational patterns help a writer construct a powerful argument. Here are some of the most commonly used patterns:

- *Comparison and contrast*: investigation of the similarities and differences between two or more things
- *Classification*: division of a complex topic into smaller categories
- *Cause and effect*: exploration of why something happens and what the results will be
- *Chronological order*: examination of a situation or event in the order in which it occurred
- *Definition*: explanation of a series of key terms or concepts

Select the pattern that best describes the way in which "Whose Lathe?" is organized. Explain your choice.

The Short Story

Defined

B y P e t e r H u n g

Check several dictionaries for definitions of the term *short story*. How precise are these definitions? Which definition do you find the most useful?

In the following essay, student writer Peter Hung explores why it is not that easy to create a definition that truly captures the essence of the short story form.

zymurgy (zī' mər jē) n. [ZYM (O) - + URGY] the branch of chemistry dealing with fermentation, as in making wine, ale, etc. **While in college, Mr. Budweiser got an "A" in Zymurgy 101.**

There. It was done. The last entry of my new, updated *Dictionary of the English Language, Thirty-Fifth College Edition* was finished. Even I was impressed. It contained over a billion lexicographical entries, spanned a thousand volumes, and would take up more than four hundred feet of shelf space. Best of all, it would be the first dictionary of mine to be bound in genuine Naugahyde, which looks like leather, but at a fraction of the cost. Yes, I was impressed. I, the

lexicographer's lexicographer. I, Webster.¹

I settled back in my chair, feeling quite content. But wait—something wasn't quite right, something I couldn't identify. It was not unlike the insistent buzzing of an invisible fly that is trapped in a room and cannot find its way out. Pensively, I reached for a chocolate-chip cookie from the plate of goodies I always keep on my desk. Eating helps me to think clearly, and in my line of work you do a lot of thinking.

"Ah, yes," I mumbled through cookie crumbs. I opened the rough copy of Volume 768 and flipped some pages. Scanning page 393, I found what I wanted:

¹**Noah Webster:** (1758–1843). American educator, author, and lexicographer. It took him 27 years to prepare the original edition of *An American Dictionary of the English Language*.

shortstop (shôrt ' stăp ') n. Baseball
1 the infielder stationed between
second and third base 2 the area
covered by a shortstop. I hate
baseball, and I absolutely detest
playing shortstop.

short straw (shôrt ' strô ') n. The
bad end of a deal, usually obtained
through the process of drawing
straws (see **draw straw**) or through
some other lottery system. Tom
got the short straw; he, out of
all the new prisoners at San
Quentin, would be executed
first.

I had almost forgotten that I
hadn't yet defined "short story." I
had left a blank space between
"shortstop" and "short straw,"
intending to fill it in later on. I
have a habit of postponing the
hardest terms, and "short story" is
as hard as they come.

I went to the kitchen, got
another plate of cookies, and
returned to my desk. Picking up a
pencil, I began writing.

short story (shôrt ' stôr ' ē) n. A
kind of story that is short.

Well, it was a start. But I had
to be more specific. After all, the
dictionary might be consulted by,
say, a high school student who
must write an essay defining the
short story. People around the
world depend on me to shed light
on all manner of topics, and I
mustn't let them down. I bit into

a cookie and continued.

short story (shôrt ' stôr ' ē) n. A
kind of story that is short (i.e., no
longer than thirty pages) with a
simple plot and no more than ten
characters.

Now that was more like it. I
rewarded myself with another
cookie. Munching steadily, I
came up with another idea. I
grabbed Volume 359, turned to
page 410, and located the desired
entry.

Hemingway (hem' in wā'), Ernest
1899–1961. U.S. novelist and
short-story writer whose writing is
characterized by the use of short,
simple, declarative sentences (e.g.,
"Ad stood up," as in "The Bat-
tler"). Two of his favorite themes
are man's internal struggle (as in
"The Snows of Kilimanjaro") and
trout fishing. Two interesting facts
about Hemingway's short stories
are that "The Short Happy Life of
Francis Macomber" is thirty-five
pages long, and "The Light of the
World" has more than ten
characters in it.

Hmp. This discovery was some-
what of a mixed blessing. Here
I was reminded that the style of
the short story is simple, and
that its themes are man's internal
struggle and trout fishing. Unfor-
tunately, I was also reminded that
short stories can have more than
ten characters and thirty pages.

I erased my definition and started again.

short story (shôrt ' stôr ' ē) n. A

kind of story that is short and deals with man's internal struggle or trout fishing; stylistically, it consists primarily of short, simple, declarative sentences, such as "Ad stood up."

This definition was, I felt, lacking something, so I chose a large molasses cookie from the diminishing pile and shoved it into my mouth. It had just the right consistency and texture, but not quite enough molasses. Just the same, it cleared my head, and I was able to delve into my memory for another appropriate reference. I pulled out Volume 299 and opened it to the right page.

Ellison (el ' i sen), **Ralph** 1914– .

U.S. writer who won acclaim with his novel *Invisible Man*. Also wrote short stories of note, such as "Battle Royal," in which a single event serves to illustrate the struggle of black Americans against racial discrimination and mistreatment. Ellison tends to use more complex sentences than Hemingway, as well as more adjectives, adverbs, and similes to produce vivid images; e.g., "The boys groped about like blind, cautious crabs crouching to protect their mid-sections, their heads pulled in short against their shoulders, their arms stretched nervously before

them, with their fists testing the smoke-filled air like the knobbed feelers of hypersensitive snails."

This couldn't be happening. Ellison and Hemingway were as different as authors can be, and yet they both had produced these "things" that are categorized as short stories. Despite an increasing sense of vertigo, I swallowed my last cookie and turned to another entry, this time from Volume 745.

Salinger (sal ' in jer). **J(erome)**

D(avid) 1919– . U.S. novelist and short-story writer. Salinger blends overtones of love and squalor in his brilliant short story "To Esmé—with Love and Squalor." He separates the squalid part from the rest by dividing the story into two distinct sections, with completely different settings and characters. The structure is very different from that of stories by Hemingway or Ellison, which develop in a continuous, unbroken manner.

I stared blankly down at my plate, now devoid of goodies except for a few crumbs. I licked up the crumbs in desperation. My head was fairly spinning, and I was, for the first time in my illustrious career, at a loss for words. "Get a grip on yourself, Web," I told myself. Putting down my pencil, I got up from my chair, walked slowly over to the couch, and sat down heavily, feeling lost and bloated.

I don't know when I fell asleep, but I did, which was a good thing, because I tend to think better when I am asleep than when I am awake, except when I'm eating cookies. So my mind subconsciously mulled over the various ways of defining "short story." Hemingway, Ellison, Salinger, Hemingway, style, simple, plot, Salinger, short, Ellison, complex, Battle of Snows and Squalor, J(erome) D(avid) Waldo, character, theme, Ernest, earnest, any earnest, some Salinger, every Esmé, Royal Macomber, Short Happy Story of Life, Love, and Light of, dark.

Somewhere along the line, I came to the conclusion that the short story could not be defined, for it was all these things and more. It was strange, but I saw the Short Story there. No, not the spirit of the short story, or the embodiment of the short story.

But just the Short Story there. It was like a candle in the darkness, or the flash of a firefly at night, shining brightly and then gone. Yes, it was gone. But that moment of light revealed a part of life that had gone unnoticed before. Or perhaps had been noticed, but ignored.

At any rate, it wasn't anything you could put into a dictionary, even Webster's *Dictionary of the English Language, Thirty-Fifth College Edition*. I woke up, no longer at a loss, but still feeling bloated by an overdose of thought-provoking cookies. I returned to my desk, erased my definition of the short story, and began to write again.

short story (shôrt ' stôr ' ē) n. A

section of a building that extends from the floor to the ceiling and is lower than usual in height. **My, that building has a short story!**

Peter Hung was a senior at San Diego High School in San Diego, California, when he wrote this story. After reading a lot of short stories, Peter concluded that this particular genre is not easy to pin down. To make his point in an imaginative and amusing way he shows us Webster—"the lexicographer's lexicographer"—struggling to define "short story" in an updated edition of his dictionary.

1. Response

- a. Peter Hung, the student who wrote "The Short Story Defined," chose a humorous tone for his essay. What details and techniques create the humour?
- b. Did you like the humour? Do you think the humour strengthened or weakened the essay? Give reasons for your point of view.
- c. Despite the light tone of this selection, what are the serious points it makes about the short story?

2. Literature Studies Exploring Genre Is "The Short Story Defined" more of an essay or a short story? In a group, develop a series of convincing arguments supporting the view that it is an essay. Then develop other arguments suggesting that it should actually be classified as a story. Present your arguments to the class.

3. Language Focus Definitions A good definition is short, precise, and easy to understand. With a partner, brainstorm three words that you will attempt to define. Try to choose words that are not yet in the dictionary—good candidates are specialty words related to a sport or hobby. Write the definitions. How can you test the quality of your definitions?

4. Research and Inquiry Three famous short story writers are mentioned in this selection—all of them male. Needless to say, female authors could also have been included in this attempt to define a short story. Research two classic female short story writers, such as Katherine Mansfield, Toni Cade Bambara, or Alice Munro, and write biographical entries similar to those the author created for Hemingway, Ellison, and Salinger.

"I write for my dying cactus."

What Colour Is a Rose?

By Drew Hayden Taylor

As a Native writer there are always three questions I get asked, *ad nauseam*, whenever I give a lecture or a reading for a non-Native audience. Question one: "What do you feel about cultural appropriation?" My answer: "About the same as I feel about land appropriation." Question two: "When you write your plays or stories, do you write for a specifically Native audience or a White audience?" My answer: "I'm usually alone in my room when I write, except for my dying cactus. So I guess that means I write for my dying cactus." The final, and in my opinion, most annoying question I often get asked is: "Are you a writer that happens to be Native, or a Native that happens to be a writer?"

I was not aware there had to be a difference. I was always under the impression that the two could be and often were, synonymous. But evidently I am in error. Over the past few years of working as a professional writer, I have slowly begun to understand the rules of participation in the television and prose industry in terms of this difference. It seems there is a double standard. Surprise, surprise.

It is not uncommon, though deemed politically incorrect, for White writers to write satires about Native people quite freely, particularly on television. Notice many of the "people of pallor" script credits on such shows as *North of 60* (which, granted, does have one talented Native writer), *Northern Exposure* (I guess I'll have to move to the North since it seems that's where all the Native people live), and movies like *Where the Spirit Lives* or *Dance Me Outside*. All these shows have strong, identifiable Native characters created by non-Natives.

However, should a Native writer want to explore the untrodden world outside the Aboriginal literary ghetto, immediately the fences appear, and opportunities dry up. Evidently, the Powers That Be out there in the big cruel world have very specific ideas of what a Native writer can and can't do. Only recently, a friend of mine submitted a story to a new CBC anthology series in development, about Native people, called *The Four Directions*.

His story outline was soon returned with an explanation that the producers thought the story wasn't "Native enough" for their purposes. I myself submitted a story to the producers, and during our first story meeting, I received a stirring and heartfelt lecture about how they, the producers, were determined to present the Native voice as authentically and accurately as possible, and how committed they were to allowing us Native-types the chance to tell our stories our way. I was then asked if I could cut the first eight pages of my twenty-seven-page script. Oddly enough, they seemed puzzled by my sudden burst of laughter.

I once wrote an episode of *Street Legal* and accidentally caught a glimpse of a memo from the producer to a story editor asking him to rewrite the dialogue of my Native Elder to "make him more Indian." I guess as a Native person, I don't know how real "Indians" talk. Bummer. These are just a few examples of the battle Native writers often face.

I hereby pose a question to these people who judge our stories. I personally would like to know by what set of qualifications these people examine Native stories. Is there an Aboriginal suitability quotient posted somewhere? If there is, I would love the opportunity to learn more about how I should write as a Native person.

For a story to be "Native enough," must there be a birch bark or buckskin quota? Perhaps there are supposed to be vast roaming herds of moose running past the screen. Oh geez, I guess I'm not Native enough. I momentarily forgot, moose don't herd, they just hang out with flying squirrels that have their own cartoon show.

Or maybe I's got be good writer like dem Indians whats W.P. Kinsella writes about. It no sound like any Indian I ever hears, but what the hell, I maybe win bunch of awards. On second thought, you never mind. I get headache trying write like this.

So what's a writer to do? Damned if he does, damned if he doesn't. And what if I want to write stories about non-Native people? It's possible, but will I be given a chance? I'm sure I could do it. I've learned enough about how White people really live from watching all those episodes of *Married With Children* and *Baywatch*.

Essays

This all brings us back to the original question. Am I a writer who happens to be Native, or a Native that happens to be a writer? Do I have a choice? I think that the next time I get asked that, I'll ask the equally deep and important question: "Is a zebra black with white stripes, or white with black stripes?"

Just watch. They'll make that into a racial question.

Scriptwriter **Drew Hayden Taylor** has written *The Bootlegger Blues*, which won the Canadian Authors Association Award for Drama, and *Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth*, which won the Dora Award for most outstanding new play. Taylor also writes essays and commentaries for *The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star* and *This Magazine*.

1. Response

- a. In your own words, state the "double standard" that Drew Hayden Taylor is commenting on in his essay.
- b. Taylor uses the term *cultural appropriation*. What does it mean? Give an example of a situation that could be described as cultural appropriation.
- c. What is the tone of the essay? Select three quotations that provide good examples. As a reader, how did you respond to this tone? Did it appeal to you? Do you think Taylor's approach is effective? Explain.
- d. Did you find Taylor's anecdotal evidence convincing? Why or why not?

2. Language Conventions Language Level "What Colour Is a Rose?" is written in an informal, conversational style. Identify the specific techniques Taylor uses to create this style, providing one or two examples of each. Pay attention to aspects such as sentence structure, punctuation, and diction. Using a conversational style yourself, write a paragraph that tells about the advantages and/or disadvantages of using informal language in an essay.

3. Making Connections The title of Taylor's essay may be a literary allusion to two famous quotations that also contain the word rose. How could you find out what they are? Try to identify what those quotations might be. How does the title of Taylor's essay relate to the main point of his essay? Are the quotations also appropriate to this message? Explain.

"It is a terrible irony that as formal development reaches more deeply into rain forests, deserts and other isolated environments, it tends to destroy the only cultures that have proved able to thrive in these environments."

Lessons From a Walk in a Rain Forest

By David Suzuki

FROM CHOCO FOREST, COLOMBIA—To most Canadians the name Colombia conjures up images of coffee. But to biologists, Colombia is home to one of the richest ecosystems on the planet, the Choco tropical rain forest pinched between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes mountain range. It extends from Panama through Colombia to Peru.

Chugging from Bahia Solano to Utria National Park on the *Jes-tiven*, a wooden boat, I am accompanied by Francis Hallé, a French expert on tropical forests. Hallé is famous for having created a huge, pneumatic platform that can be erected on the canopy where researchers can explore 600 to 800 square metres of the treetops.

Hallé points out the thick cloak of trees extending to the water line. "The first thing people do when they invade such a virgin forest," he says, "is to clear the trees along the shore." Despite the difference in vegetation, the tree-covered mountains

and pristine bays remind me of British Columbia.

Utria National Park was formed in 1987 and covers 54,300 hectares of spectacular forest. In a heavy rain, I set off alone to walk across a peninsular saddle along a thin path that is a slimy ribbon of red mud. Serpentine tree roots coil along the forest floor to suck nutrients from the thin topsoil and anchor the immense trunks in place. Though impediments on level ground, the roots provide welcome hand and footholds on the steep hills.

In the forest, temperature and light intensity immediately drop. Thirty metres overhead, the canopy blocks out the sky, preventing growth of the heavy underbrush we think of as jungle. The steady rainfall is intercepted by foliage so the water doesn't pound onto the soil. Even though it has rained constantly, the water in the creeks is crystal clear.

The ground is littered with leaves. In Canada, we classify

trees as deciduous or evergreens, but here the trees shed leaves year round. However, instead of building up to form thick humus, they quickly become food for insects and fungi and thus are recycled back up into the forest biomass.

It's easy to walk along creek beds or through the trees with little vegetation to hamper movement. The noise is constant, a cacophony of buzzing, clicking, and humming of insects and frogs. Walking quietly and slowly, eyes adapting to the shadows and shapes, one begins to notice movement that betrays a frog, a butterfly, a bird. A cosmos of complexity opens up.

Back on the boat, Hallé informs me that "jungle" is a word from India referring to the tangle of secondary growth that results after the initial forest is cleared. It is an insult to call a primary forest a jungle, he says. He draws my attention to trees with special properties—the hard white "tagwa" seeds, six to a cluster within an armoured shell, that can be carved like ivory; fruit trees; parasitic air-breathing plants, lianes, orchids. But when I bring a seed or leaf, he often admits he has no idea what it is. When I ask how much taxonomists know of the species residing in tropical rain forests, Hallé makes a gesture of futility and replies: "It's an impossible mess." He tells me individuals of one

species are usually spaced far apart and each may house different spectra of associated species. A lifetime could be spent studying the organisms in a few square metres while an adjacent section could take another lifetime. That's the reason our ignorance is so vast.

Hallé believes the fabled diversity within a tropical rain forest gives it its stability. When one or a few trees are removed, the opening in the canopy allows light to reach the forest floor and stimulates a succession of plants. Over time, like a small nick in the skin, the opening is healed and filled in. But remove a large section of trees and like a mortal wound, the forest cannot repair itself.

Here a destructive parasite is controlled because its target species is not concentrated in an area the way species are in temperate forests. "There's no need for pesticides," Hallé tells me, "because the forest is too diverse to allow an outbreak." Similarly, an introduced exotic species can't explode like rabbits in Australia or purple loosestrife in Canada because there are too many predators able to attack them. So biodiversity is not just a descriptive property of tropical rain forests, it is the very mechanism of its stability for survival.

World demand for lumber and pulp continues to rise while forest plantations cannot deliver

wood of quality or quantity. That's why deforestation continues to claim the great forests of the planet and threatens the Choco.

The Choco is the traditional home of perhaps 30,000 aboriginal people belonging to three main groups—Embera, Waunana, and Cuna—who continue to live as they have for thousands of years, depending on the forest for their food, medicines, and materials.

From the airport at Bahia Solano, we take a bus up the coast to the village of El Valle, which is populated by descendants of African slaves who were brought to mine gold more than 400 years ago. We rent a dugout with a motor and guide to take us up the Boro Boro River. After about three hours, we finally leave the plantations, cleared fields, sugar cane, and breadfruit trees to enter primary rain forest. As the river narrows, we drag the dugouts across shallow riffles and around fallen trees and logjams. At one point, we unload the boat and sink it to push it under a huge log blocking the river.

Night falls early and quickly in the tropics and as the light fades, we know we are still hours away from our destination, the

Embera village of Boro Boro at the junction with the Mutata River. Five hours after nightfall, we finally reach the settlement, exhausted, wet, but exhilarated by the adventure. Hammocks and mosquito nets are slung in the tiny school, and we soon join the frog calls with snores.

Boro Boro is home for eighty-four people living under thatched huts built on supports two metres above the ground. The tiny cluster of buildings is surrounded by small fields of domesticated plants. Life here revolves around the river for bathing, laundry, food, and transportation. A three-hour hike up the Mutata ends at spectacular falls that drop 400 metres into a huge pool that is considered the source of life and power in the river. The people of Boro Boro fear the power of the place and stay away. Only the shaman goes to the pool to perform rituals to ensure the fecundity of the river and forest.

The villagers tell us they want to keep their culture and way of life. They have heard of proposals to develop the area, which one prime minister referred to as Colombia's "piggy bank." The Pan American Highway, nearly finished, was stopped only when the minister of the newly formed

The challenge of nonfiction is to marry art and truth.

Phyllis Rose

environment ministry threatened to resign if it wasn't. There are other proposals to build super-ports on the coast, a network of highways to link the ports to cities, and huge dams to deliver electricity to isolated villages. The familiar notion of "development" by extracting the resources of the forest is irresistible in Colombia too.

Colombia's forests, of which Choco is an important part, have the most known bird species (19.4 percent of all the world's known species compared to 17.6 percent in Brazil and 15 percent in Africa) and orchids, the second most amphibians, the third most reptiles, and one of every five bats. This rich tapestry of living things is beyond any scientific comprehension and, if destroyed, will never be duplicated or recreated.

There are people who have had the knowledge and expertise to make a living from these forests for millennia, but their futures are as uncertain as the fragile ecosystems that are their homes. The 1987 United Nations report *Our Common Future* stated: "It is a terrible irony that as formal development reaches more deeply into rain forests, deserts and other isolated environments, it tends to destroy the only cultures that have proved able to thrive in these environments."

Indigenous people throughout Colombia are organizing to resist incursions into their land.

In the Choco, OREWA was formed to represent the Embera, Waunana, and Cuna. But in the government discussions about the future of the Choco, the indigenous people who have always occupied the forests are seldom involved.

The predicament is complicated by an Afro-Colombian population that outnumbers the aboriginal people by ten to one. After escaping slavery, they were able to survive in coastal villages for 200 to 300 years. Lacking the indigenous culture and knowledge base built around the forest, the blacks have eked out a living and are desperate for the material benefits of modern life.

In negotiations with the government, OREWA has included Afro-Colombians as stakeholders in the forest lands. But impoverished people are easy prey to the blandishments of developers. Promises of jobs, electricity, and television tempt them to welcome roads and ports. To them, the forest is a resource that can be converted to money. If we in Canada haven't been able to resist the siren's call of development, why should people who start out with far less?

Environmentalists in industrial nations of the North are concerned about the fate of tropical rain forests that have been labelled the "lungs of the planet" and the "wellsprings of biodiversity." Here in Colombia, Latin

Americans demand to know why they are expected to save the forests when countries in the North haven't protected theirs. In the debate over vanishing forests, the people who live in them are often forgotten.

Travelling through the Choco rain forest along mud tracks, one can't help but wonder why magnificent forests like this are being traded for squalid towns and villages of impoverished people and of scrawny cattle grazing on barren hills. Is there no other way to create income for the human residents while preserving the forest ecosystem?

According to Francis Hallé there is. He has spent his life studying plant growth in the canopy of tropical rain forests. When I ask him whether we know enough to cut down the likes of the Choco and regrow it, he replies, "Absolutely not!" He points out that a tree plantation is not a forest and that rapidly growing species like eucalyptus or pine imported from other parts of the world seldom perform as expected. Hallé says ideas developed from northern temperate forests are inappropriate for the tropics, where vegetation and soil are completely different.

The secret to the resilience and productivity of a tropical rain forest is its tremendous variety of living forms. As long as the forest is intact, people can cut into it as the indigenous inhabitants have

for thousands of years, and the cut will heal. But if the clearing is large, then like a spider web that loses too many threads, the system collapses.

Throughout tropical countries of Africa, South America, and southeast Asia, Hallé finds a sophisticated human practice called agroforestry (AF) that has sustained communities for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Hallé has observed carvings on Indonesian temples depicting AF practices about A.D. 1000.

AF requires a profound knowledge of plants that can be used for a variety of needs. Useful plants are collected from intact primary forests and deliberately planted in a surrounding AF Buffer Zone. Here one finds small shrubs, medicinal plants, parasitic lianes for rope and furniture, and large trees that yield wood, edible leaves, and fruits.

Fifty percent of the biodiversity present in the primary forest can be found in an AF Buffer Zone. In fact, says Hallé, it has only been in the past century that foresters recognized that the AF Buffer Zone is human-created and not a natural forest. Domesticated animals are grazed in the Buffer Zone, where the huts and villages are also located. The primary forest remains intact to provide new material during collecting expeditions.

Hallé says, "Agroforesters are true capitalists; their capital is

biological and it is constantly growing." Usually, they live off the interest but when they are confronted with an emergency, they may harvest more than they usually take, sure in the knowledge that over time, the forest will grow back.

Hallé's description of agroforestry makes one wonder why it isn't being pushed everywhere as a sustainable alternative to massive clearing of tropical forests. Hallé's explanation is: "AF is always local and small-scale. People are constantly coming out of the villages with baskets of fruits, vegetables, meat, and plant products for trade or sale, but that doesn't yield the large and quick profits that governments and multinational companies want."

Since all useful organisms are harvested from the Buffer Zone, the primary forest is protected as a priceless source of genetic material. Communities practising

AF don't need outside help or expertise because they depend on their own time-tested indigenous knowledge.

Hallé observes that practitioners of AF are always women. Men may be recruited to cut trees down or lift heavy things, but women are in charge. He believes it reflects women's concerns with food and children's health. "Large-scale monoculturing seems to be more of a male impulse, while diverse, small-scale ventures seem more feminine," Hallé says.

AF exposes the insanity of destroying tropical forests for a one-time-only recovery of cash. AF rests on the fundamental capital of nature, which, if protected, can sustain communities and ecosystems indefinitely. But that flies in the face of the current suicidal path of global economics that glorifies human creativity and productivity above all.

Dr. David Suzuki was born in Vancouver, B.C., in 1936. He is an award-winning scientist, broadcaster, and environmentalist, and Chair of the David Suzuki Foundation—a charity concerned with environmental issues. Suzuki is well known as the host of CBC's science TV series, *The Nature of Things*, and is the author of over 30 books. He has received numerous awards for his work, including the Order of Canada, and is internationally recognized for his work in the field of ecology.

1. Response

- a. Create a map that would be a useful accompaniment to David Suzuki's essay.
- b. What did you know about David Suzuki before you read "Lessons From a Walk in a Rain Forest"? Summarize your prior knowledge. Do you regard Suzuki as a credible commentator on ecological issues? Explain.
- c. In point form, note the factual information about rain forests contained in the essay. What steps could you take to establish the reliability of this information?
- d. Make a list of environmental issues (local, national, or global) that interest you. Choose one of the issues and write a brief explanation of why that issue is important generally, and to you in particular.

2. **Literature Studies Expository Writing** The purpose of expository writing is to convey information to the reader, but the challenge is to keep the reader interested. Reread "Lessons From a Walk in a Rain Forest" and note the techniques Suzuki uses to hold the reader's attention. Provide specific examples of each technique. Did Suzuki meet the challenge of engaging your interest? Why or why not?

3. **Writing Fact Sheet** In activity 1. d above, you selected one environmental issue of interest to you. Your task is to draft a **fact sheet** covering that issue. Do some research to gather background information.

A **fact sheet** presents key information about a particular topic, issue, or organization. It provides concise answers to basic questions. Some fact sheets are written in point form, others in full sentences.

Your fact sheet might provide some or all of the following: statistics, definitions, answers to frequently-asked

questions, predictions, graphs, maps, resource lists, and so on. When you present your fact sheet, explain what was most difficult about preparing it

4. **Critical Thinking** A critical thinker seeks out information from a variety of sources before coming to a conclusion. In a group, make a plan for obtaining additional perspectives about rain forest management and preservation; then carry out that plan. What difficulties did you face in locating and analysing the information? Based on your experience, develop five guidelines or principles for obtaining and evaluating multiple points of view on an issue.

What did media guru, Marshall McLuhan, envision as a "classroom without walls"? This article was written in 1957. How has our view of media changed?

Classroom Without Walls

Essay by Marshall McLuhan

It's natural today to speak of "audio and visual aids" to teaching, for we still think of the book as norm, of other media as incidental. We also think of the new media—press, radio, movies, TV—as MASS MEDIA & think of the book as an individualistic form.

Individualistic because it isolated the reader in silence & helped create the Western "I." Yet it was the first product of mass production.

With it everybody could have the same books. It was impossible in medieval times for different students, different institutions, to have copies of the same book. Manuscripts, commentaries, were dictated. Students memorized.

Instruction was almost entirely oral, done in groups. Solitary study was reserved for the advanced scholar. The first printed books were "visual aids" to oral instruction.

Before the printing press, the young learned by listening, watching, doing. So, until recently, our own rural children learned the language & skills of their elders. Learning took place outside the classrooms. Only those aiming at professional careers went to school at all.

Today in our cities, most learning occurs outside the classroom. The sheer quantity of information conveyed by press-mags-film-TV-radio *far exceeds* the quantity of information conveyed by school instruction & texts. This challenge has destroyed the monopoly of the book as a teaching aid & cracked the very walls of the classroom, so suddenly, we're confused, baffled.

In this violently upsetting social situation, many teachers naturally view the offerings of the new media as entertainment, rather than education. *But this view carries no conviction to the student.*

Find a classic which wasn't first regarded as light entertainment. Nearly all vernacular works were so regarded until the 19th century.

Many movies are obviously handled with a degree of insight &

maturity at least equal to the level permitted in today's textbooks. Olivier's *Henry V* & *Richard III* assemble a wealth of scholarly & artistic skill which reveal Shakespeare at a very high level, yet in a way easy for the young to enjoy.

The movie is to dramatic representation what the book was to the manuscript. It makes available to many & at many times & places what otherwise would be restricted to a few at few times & places. The movie, like the book, is a ditto device. TV shows to 50,000,000 simultaneously. Some feel that the value of experiencing a book is diminished by being extended to many minds. This notion is always implicit in the phrases "mass media," "mass entertainment"—useless phrases obscuring the fact THAT *English itself is a mass medium*. Today we're beginning to realize that the new media aren't just mechanical gimmicks for creating worlds of illusion, *but new languages with new & unique powers of expression*. Historically, the resources of English have been shaped & expressed in constantly new & changing ways. The printing press changed, not only the quantity of writing, but the character of language & the relations between author & public. Radio, film, TV pushed written English towards the spontaneous shifts & freedom of the spoken idiom. They aided us in the recovery of intense awareness of facial language & bodily gesture. If these "mass media" should serve only to weaken or corrupt previously achieved levels of verbal & pictorial culture, it won't be because there's anything inherently wrong with them. *It will be because we've failed to master them as new languages in time to assimilate them to our total cultural heritage.*

These new developments, under quiet analytic survey, point to a basic strategy of culture for the classroom. When the printed book first appeared, it threatened the oral procedures of teaching, and created the classroom as we now know it. Instead of making his own text, his own dictionary, his own grammar, the student started out with these tools. He could study, not one, but several languages. Today these new media threaten, instead of merely reinforce, the procedures of this traditional classroom. It's customary to answer this threat with denunciations of the unfortunate character & effect of movies & TV, just as the comic book was feared & scorned & rejected from the classroom. Its good & bad features in form & content, when carefully set beside other kinds of art & narrative, could have become a major asset to the teacher.

Popular magazines multiply while the library shelves remain undisturbed.

Elisabeth Marbury

Where student interest is already intensely focused is the natural point at which to be in the elucidation of other problems & interests. *The educational task is not only to provide basic tools of perception, but to develop judgement & discrimination with ordinary social experience.*

Few students ever acquire skill in analysis of newspapers. Fewer have any ability to discuss a movie intelligently. *To be articulate & discriminating about ordinary affairs & information is the mark of an educated man.*

It's misleading to suppose there's any basic difference between education & entertainment. This distinction merely relieves people of the responsibility of looking into the matter. It's like setting up a distinction between didactic & lyric poetry on the ground that one teaches, the other pleases. However, it's always been true that whatever pleases teaches more effectively.

(Herbert) Marshall McLuhan was born in 1911 in Edmonton, Alberta. He taught in schools and at St. Michael's College of the University of Toronto, where he became director of the Centre for Culture and Technology. McLuhan is well known for his theories about the role of the electronic media in mass popular culture. He prophesied that printed books would become obsolete, killed off by TV and other electronic information technology.

I. Response

- a. What is the thesis of this essay? What points in McLuhan's essay prove his thesis?
- b. Is there any statement in this essay that you agree or disagree with strongly? What is it? What is your viewpoint?
- c. This article was written in 1957, before the introduction of the Internet. How do you think McLuhan would have responded to the Internet? How would his essay change if it were written today?
- d. Examine the use of italics, capital letters, and symbols within this essay. How does the typography the author has chosen to use affect the reader? The essay's meaning?

Media

e. Who do you think McLuhan's target audience is? What is his purpose in addressing this audience? What makes you think so? How has he created a voice appropriate to his audience and purpose?

2. Research and Inquiry Consider how media have been used in the past to help educate the masses—whether students or the general public. For example, in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries in England, suffragettes handed out pamphlets and carried signs to help persuade the general populace that women deserved the right to vote. And in Germany in the 1930s, film documentaries and radio were used to spread propaganda and build support for the Nazi party.

Choose a time period and region and research how media were used to persuade the masses. Speculate on the effectiveness of the media for causing change or educating people.

Alternatively, you could research the impact of one medium—such as radio—on education, or on people in general.

3. Media Choose a Format Produce a media work that will convince your board of education to use media more widely in the classroom. You could choose to design a Web page, a print ad, a TV show, or a poster, for example. Your use of language, visuals, and design should reflect your audience and purpose.

4. Literature Studies Diction Examine the author's choice of words and explain which of the following most aptly describes McLuhan's diction: formal, colloquial, abstract, concrete, literal, figurative.

Consider the following statement from a magazine in the 1950s: "In very few instances do people really know what they want, even when they say they do."

—*Advertising Age*

Have things changed?

The *Trouble* With People

Essay by Vance Packard

Marketers always encountered difficulties in trying to persuade people to buy all the products their companies could fabricate.

One particularly disturbing difficulty was the apparent perversity and unpredictability of the prospective customers. Marketers repeatedly suffered grievous losses in campaigns that by all the rules of logic should have succeeded. The marketers felt increasing dissatisfaction with their conventional methods for sizing up a market. These methods were known in the trade most commonly as "nose-counting." Under nose-counting, statistic-minded interviewers would determine the percentage of married women, ages twenty-one to thirty-five, in Omaha, Nebraska, who said they wanted, and would buy a three-legged stove if it cost no more than \$249.

The trouble with this approach, they found, was that what people might tell interviewers had only a remote bearing on how the people would actually behave in a buying situation when confronted with a three-legged stove or almost anything else.

Gradually, many perceptive marketers began becoming suspicious of three basic assumptions they had made, in their efforts to be logical, concerning the predictable behavior of human beings, especially customers.

First, they decided, you can't assume that people know what they want.

A major ketchup maker kept getting complaints about its bottle, so it made a survey. Most of the people interviewed said they would prefer another type the company was considering. When the company went to the expense of bringing out this other bottle in test markets, it was overwhelmingly rejected in favor of the old bottle, even by people who had favored it in interviews.

Second, some marketers concluded, you can't assume people will tell you the truth about their wants and dislikes even if they know them. What you are more likely to get, they decided, are answers that will protect the informants in their steadfast endeavor to appear to the world as really sensible, intelligent, rational beings. One management consulting firm has concluded that accepting the word of a customer as to what he wants is "the least reliable index the manufacturer can have on what he ought to do to win customers."

The Advertising Research Foundation took magazines to task for asking people what magazines they read frequently, and naïvely accepting the answers given as valid. The people, it contended, are likely to admit reading only magazines of high prestige value. One investigator suggests that if you seriously accepted people's answers you might assume that *Atlantic Monthly* is America's most-read magazine and some of the confession magazines the least read; whereas actually the confession magazines in question may have twenty times the readership of *Atlantic Monthly*.

A brewery making two kinds of beer made a survey to find what kind of people drank each beer, as a guide to its merchandisers. It asked people known to favor its general brand name: "Do you drink the light or the regular?" To its astonishment it found people reporting they drank light over the regular by better than three to one. The truth of the matter was that for years the company, to meet consumer demand, had been brewing nine times as much regular beer as light beer. It decided that in asking people that question it was in effect asking: Do you drink the kind preferred by people of refinement and discriminating taste, or do you just drink the regular stuff?

In another case the Color Research Institute asked a group of people if they borrowed money from personal-loan companies. Every person said no. Some of them virtually shouted their answer. The truth was that all those selected for interviewing were people who were listed in the records of a local loan company as borrowers.

Finally, the marketers decided it is dangerous to assume that people can be trusted to behave in a rational way.

A department store that had become skeptical of the rationality of its customers tried an experiment. One of its slowest-moving items was

priced at fourteen cents. It changed the price to two for twenty-nine cents. Sales promptly increased 30 per cent when the item was offered at this "bargain" price.

Our toothbrushing habits offer a prime example of behavior that is at least seemingly irrational. If you ask people why they brush their teeth, most of them will tell you that their main purpose in doing so is to get particles of food out of the crevices of their teeth and thus combat decay germs. Toothpaste producers accepted this explanation for many years and based their sales campaigns on it. Advertising men who made a study of our toothbrushing habits, however, came upon a puzzle. They found that most people brushed their teeth once a day, and at the most pointless moment possible in the entire twenty-four-hour day, from the dental hygiene standpoint. That was in the morning just before breakfast, after decay germs had had a whole night to work on their teeth from particles left from supper—and just before the consumption of breakfast would bring in a new host of bacteria.

One advertising agency puzzling over this seemingly irrational behavior made a more thorough study of the reasons why we brush our teeth. It concluded that we are motivated by differing reasons, based on our personality. Some people, particularly hypochondriacs, are really concerned about those germs and are swayed by a "decay" appeal. (The hammering in recent years on all the wondrous anti-decay pastes has swollen the size of this group.) Another group, mostly extroverts, brush their teeth in the hope they will be bright and shiny. The majority of people, however, brush their teeth primarily for a reason that has little to do with dental hygiene or even their teeth. They put the brush and paste into their mouth in order to give their mouth a thorough purging, to get rid of the bad taste that has accumulated overnight. In short, they are looking for a taste sensation, as a part of their ritual of starting the day afresh. At least two of the major paste merchandisers began hitting hard at this appeal in 1955 and 1956. One promised a "clean mouth taste" and the other proclaimed that its paste "cleans your breath while it guards your teeth." (More recently one of these products got itself a new ad agency, as often happens, and the new mentor began appealing to the extrovert in us through the slogan, "You'll wonder where the yellow went—." Good results are reported, which simply proves there is always more than one way to catch a customer.)

Business Week, in commenting on the often seemingly irrational behavior of consumers, said: "People don't seem to be reasonable." However, it made this further point: "But people do act with purpose. Their behavior makes sense if you think about it in terms of its goals, of people's needs and their motives. That seems to be the secret of

understanding or manipulating people.”

Another aspect of people's behavior that has troubled marketers is that they are too easily satisfied with what they already have. Most of the marketers' factories have ever-larger warehouses full of goods to move.

By the mid-fifties American goods producers were achieving a fabulous output, and the output with automation promised to keep getting more fabulous. Since 1940, gross national product had soared more than 400 per cent; and man-hour productivity was doubling about every quarter century.

One way of viewing this rich, full life the people were achieving was the glowing one that everyone could enjoy an ever-higher standard of living. That view was thoroughly publicized. But there was another way of viewing it: that we must consume more and more, whether we want to or not, for the good of our economy.

In late 1955 the church publication *Christianity and Crisis* commented grimly on America's "ever-expanding economy." It observed that the pressure was on Americans to "consume, consume and consume, whether we need or even desire the products almost forced upon us." It added that the dynamics of an ever-expanding system require that we be "persuaded to consume to meet the needs of the productive process."

With growing productivity and prosperity the average American had five times as many discretionary dollars as he had in 1940. (These are dollars we have after we take care of our basic, immediate needs.) But discretionary dollars are also deferrable dollars—we can defer spending them if we are satisfied with what we already have. This hazard posed by so many optional dollars in our pockets was summed up quite eloquently in the October 24, 1955, issue of *Advertising Age* by an executive of the publishing firm of McGraw-Hill. He stated:

As a nation we are already so rich that consumers are under no pressure of immediate necessity to buy a very large share—perhaps as much as 40%—of what is produced, and the pressure will get progressively less in the years ahead. But if consumers exercise their option not to buy a large share of what is produced, a great depression is not far behind.

In the early fifties, with overproduction threatening on many fronts, a fundamental shift occurred in the preoccupation of people in executive suites. Production now became a relatively secondary concern.

Executive planners changed from being maker-minded to market-minded. The president of the National Sales Executives in fact exclaimed: "Capitalism is dead—consumerism is king!"

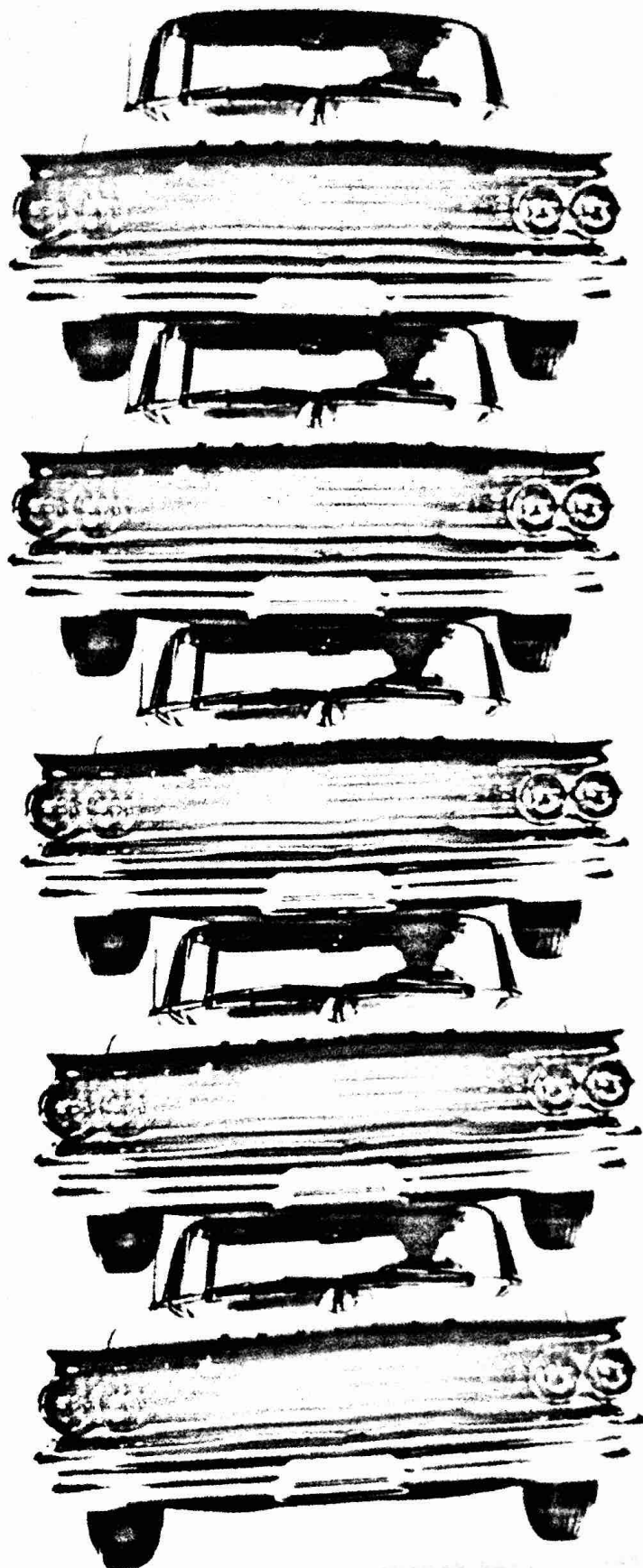
There was talk at management conventions of "the marketing revolution" and considerable pondering on how best to "stimulate" consumer buying, by creating wants in people that they still didn't realize existed. An auto maker talked of increasing his car sales by selling to "those who do not yet know what they need."

This urgently felt need to "stimulate" people brought new power, glory, and prosperity to the professional stimulators or persuaders of American industry, particularly the skilled gray-flanneled suiters of New York's Madison Avenue, known as "ad alley." In 1955, \$9,000,000,000 was poured into United States advertising, up a billion from 1954 and up three billion from 1950. For each man, woman, and child in America in 1955 roughly \$53 was spent to persuade him or her to buy products of industry. Some cosmetics firms began spending a fourth of all their income from sales on advertising and promotion. A cosmetics tycoon, probably mythical, was quoted as saying: "We don't sell lipstick, we buy customers."

One big and intimidating obstacle confronting the stimulators was the fact that most Americans already possessed perfectly usable stoves, cars, TV sets, clothes, etc. Waiting for those products to wear out or become physically obsolete before urging replacements upon the owner was intolerable. More and more, ad men began talking of the desirability of creating "psychological obsolescence."

At a conference of gas-range people the conferees were exhorted to emulate the more up-to-date car makers in this business of creating psychological obsolescence. They were reminded that auto merchandisers strive to make everyone ashamed to drive a car more than two or three years. The gas-range people were told bluntly by the director of American Color Trends: "Ladies and gentlemen, you know and I know that too many housekeepers have the attitude that 'any old piece of equipment will do so long as it works at all.'" He described the recent trend to change the color of many products and explained: "All of these trends have a definite bearing on what you can do to step up the obsolescence of gas appliances."

By the mid-fifties merchandisers of many different products were being urged by psychological counselors to become "merchants of discontent." One ad executive exclaimed with fervor: "What makes this country great is the creation of wants and desires, the creation of dissatisfaction with the old and outmoded."



5 Autos Stacked on Top of Each Other. Photo by Alfred Gescheidt.

Write a short essay explaining how the above photo represents the society or marketing attitudes described in this essay. Alternatively, search for another photo that you think represents this society, or your own society.

Vance Oakley Packard was born in Granville Summit, Pennsylvania, in 1914. He was a U.S. non-fiction writer of popular sociological tracts, including *The Hidden Persuaders* and *The Status Seekers*. He died in 1996.

1. Response

- a. List the three basic assumptions marketers were making about people, according to this essay. For each assumption, list one piece of evidence that proved to marketers that these assumptions were false.
- b. Explain the phrases *merchants of discontent* and *psychological obsolescence*. List any other marketing or media terms found in the essay. Include a definition for each term.
- c. This essay was first published in 1957. Discuss how it represents that era. Is this essay still relevant? Do you think media literacy courses in school have created wiser consumers? Explain your answer.
- d. Discuss some of the techniques that advertisers used, or still use, to reach their customers.
- e. What effect does the gender-biased language in this essay have on the reader? Why are words like *ad men* no longer appropriate?

2. Making Connections Discuss the argument that both Kilbourne and Packard present in their essays. What stance does each writer take toward the advertising media? What would they have to say to one another about consumers or consumerism?

3. Media Reaching Consumers Find examples of ads—in print, or on TV, radio, or the Internet—that use any of the methods for reaching consumers discussed in this essay. Choose one ad to present to your class, commenting on the techniques it uses, the messages it sends, and its effectiveness.

Is there a product that you think consumers are eagerly awaiting? Develop an ad for this new product. Choose one of the techniques mentioned in any of the advertising or marketing articles you have read so far.

Advertising is the key to world prosperity;
without it today modern business would be paralysed.

—Julius Klein